



## Bunk bed death a warning to parents

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**BY MONTREAL GAZETTE** APRIL 7, 2008

MONTREAL — Back in 2001, a father from the Montreal-area walked into his son's bedroom and witnessed a horrific site.

His eight-year-old boy was hanging unconscious from his bunk bed. The belt of his bathrobe was wrapped around his neck. The father's attempt to revive him was unsuccessful and the boy died in hospital.

Seven years later, a mother in Laval, north of Montreal, suffered a similar horror.

The woman entered her daughter's bedroom Sunday afternoon and found her six-year-old girl hanging from a piece of clothing on her top bunk. The woman untied her daughter and began performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation on the unconscious child, but was unsuccessful.

The young girl also died in hospital.

The girl's mother found her daughter hanging from the bunk bed about 4:15 p.m. Sunday. When she checked on her daughter 30 minutes earlier, the girl had been playing and watching television, said Const. Frank Di Genova of the Laval police.

An autopsy was being performed Monday to determine the exact cause of death.

The deaths of both children appear to have been tragic accidents, police investigating the cases said.

Although it is extremely rare for a child to die by strangling himself from a bunk bed, a physiotherapist who treats children injured in bunk bed accidents said parents need to be aware that "the potential for serious injury does exist."

As coordinator of the injury prevention program at the Montreal Children's Hospital, Carlo Galli has treated many children injured while playing on their bunk beds.

Galli was sickened to hear about the 6-year-old Laval girl who died Sunday while playing on her top bunk.

"It's just so tragic," Galli said of the girl's death.

Galli said the hospital treats about 50 children a year who come to the emergency room with bunk bed-related injuries. About eight to 10 per cent of the injuries require hospitalization, he said.

"Some are arm and leg fractures and others are head trauma from falls," he said.

Galli said many parents buy bunk beds because of space constraints in bedrooms.

For safety reasons, bunk beds should never be placed near windows, ceiling fans or light fixtures. Blind cords should be cut or tied up so children can't reach them.

The hospital has seen cases where children fall off the top bunk and through a screen window. In other cases, children jumping on the bed have smashed their heads against ceiling fans or light fixtures, Galli said.

"Sometimes the kids go crazy and are jumping around," he said. "Parents have to really monitor their kids."

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